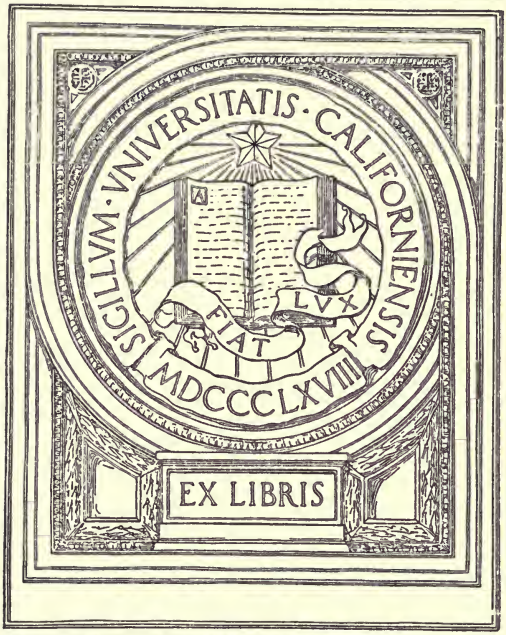
A VISIT TO A GÑANI

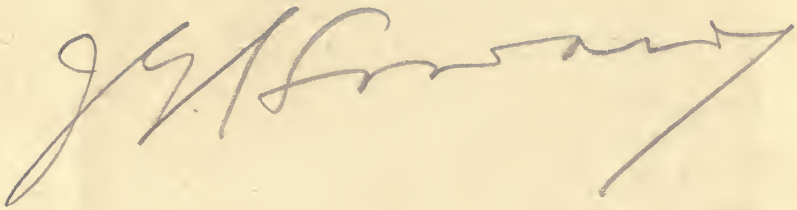
Edward Carpenter

UC-NRLF

$B 287 758

IN MEMORIAM
John Galen Howard
1864-1931





A VISIT TO A GÑÁNI

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/visittognior00carprich

The Gñani.

A VISIT TO A GÑÁNI

OR WISE MAN OF THE EAST

BY

EDWARD CARPENTER

Price One and Sixpence Net

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & COMPANY, LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 44 AND 45 RATHBONE PLACE
1911

PREFACE

THE following pages form a portion of my book of travels in Ceylon and India, entitled "From Adam's Peak to Elephanta," and are now reprinted in separate form in order to render them more accessible. The subject of the Indian Wisdom-religion and its tradition has of late years been much studied in the West; but though there has been frequent talk of "Mahatmas" and "Adepts" and Gñánis (or Jnanis), there seems to have been curiously little published in this country in the way of plain and simple records of such persons. When (now some twenty years ago) I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the Gñáni here spoken of every day for about six weeks, I felt that his conversation as well as his general personality and habits were well worthy of note, and that some record of these might be useful to the Western world. I therefore put it before myself to write down as simply and straightforwardly as I could, what I heard and saw.

As said in the text below, one must be careful not to presuppose in these cases a stereotyped pattern of man to which all instances are sure to conform. On the contrary, in every department of Nature there is—as may well be expected—an endless variety. Yet "The Grammarian" of whom I speak was certainly typical in his firm adherence to the ancient tradition. One almost felt, as I say, in talking to him, that one was in the presence of an old Vedic teacher of 3000 years past. He certainly possessed a profound insight into, and experience of, the depths of the human soul; and he was received by his own people as so great a "Master" that, since his death, a small temple or shrine has been erected over his body, and has become the goal of constant pilgrimages.*

* For some account of the Hindu temples and festivals generally, see the complete book, "From Adam's Peak to Elephanta" (Sonnenschein, 4s. 6d.).

The portrait (frontispiece) does not, of course, do justice to its subject. It fails to give the piercing intensity of his eyes, or the profound calm and *recueillement* of his expression. It does, however, suggest the very fine modelling of the features and the youthful look (for a man of seventy), due to the absence of the lines and wrinkles of cares and affairs.

The other portrait, of Paramaguru Swámi, is of a younger man, whom I personally never met, but who was well known to friends of mine. He was—as his name suggests—a teacher of Transcendent things; and like the Tilleináthan Swámi mentioned in the text below, seems to have been a great lover of Nature and the wild. At an early period he retired into the woods, and adopting the garb of nature became a familiar friend of the wild animals and of the simple villagers. The British officials, however, were shocked at his want of clothing, and on more than one occasion tried—but in vain—to arrest him. In later years he mixed a little in town life, and conformed more to its usages. He differed apparently from Tilleináthan Swámi in being less obviously endowed with occult powers; but, on the other hand, was of an equable and approachable temperament, and a favourite of the women and children, towards whom he was always especially gracious.

E. C.

February 1911

CHAPTER I

A VISIT TO A GNANI

During my stay in Ceylon I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of one of the esoteric teachers of the ancient religious mysteries. These Gurus or Adepts are to be found scattered all over the mainland of India; but they lead a secluded existence, avoiding the currents of Western civilisation—which are obnoxious to them—and rarely come into contact with the English or appear on the surface of ordinary life. They are divided into two great schools, the Himalayan and South Indian—formed probably, even centuries back, by the gradual retirement of the Adepts into the mountains and forests of their respective districts before the spread of foreign races and civilisations over the general continent. The Himalayan school has carried on the more democratic and progressive Buddhistic tradition, while the South Indian has kept more to caste and to the ancient Brahminical and later Hindu lines. This separation has led to divergences in philosophy, and there are even (so strong is sectional feeling in all ranges of human activity) slight jealousies between the adherents of the two schools; but the differences are probably after all very superficial; in essence their teaching and their work may, I think, be said to be the same.

The teacher to whom I allude belongs to the

South Indian school, and was only sojourning for a time in Ceylon. When I first made his acquaintance he was staying in the precincts of a Hindu temple. Passing through the garden and the arcade-like porch of the temple with its rude and grotesque frescoes of the gods—Siva astride the bull, Sakti, his consort, seated behind him, etc.—we found ourselves in a side-chamber, where, seated on a simple couch, his bed and day-seat in one, was an elderly man (some seventy years of age, though he did not look nearly as much as that) dressed only in a white muslin wrapper wound loosely round his lithe and even active dark brown form: his head and face shaven a day or two past, very gentle and spiritual in expression, like the best type of Roman Catholic priest—a very beautiful, full, and finely-formed mouth, straight nose and well-formed chin, dark eyes, undoubtedly the eyes of a seer, dark-rimmed eyelids, and a powerful, prophetic, and withal childlike manner. He soon lapsed into exposition, which he continued for an hour or two with but few interjections from his auditors.

At a later time he moved into a little cottage where, for several weeks, I saw him nearly every day. Every day the same—generally sitting on his couch, with bare arms and feet, the latter often coiled under him—only requiring a question to launch off into a long discourse—fluent, and even rapt, with ready and vivid illustration and long digressions, but always returning to the point. Though unfortunately my knowledge of Tamil was so slight that I could not follow his conversation and had to take advantage of the services of a friend as interpreter, still it was easy to see what a remarkable vigor and command

of language the man had, what power of concentration on the subject in hand, and what a wealth of reference—especially citation from ancient authorities—wherewith to illustrate his discourse.

Everything in the East is different from the West, and so are the methods of teaching. Teaching in the East is mainly authoritative and traditional. That is its strong point and also its defect. The pupil is not expected to ask questions of a sceptical nature or expressive of doubt; the teacher does not go about to "prove" his thesis to the pupil, or support it with arguments drawn from the plane of the pupil's intelligence; he simply redelivers to the pupil, in a certain order and sequence, the doctrines which were delivered to him in his time, which have been since verified by his own experience, and which he can illustrate by phrases and metaphors and citations drawn from the sacred books. He has, of course, his own way of presenting the whole, but the body of knowledge which he thus hands down is purely traditional, and may have come along for thousands of years with little or no change. Originality plays no part in the teaching of the Indian Sages. The knowledge which they have to impart is of a kind in which invention is not required. It purports to be a knowledge of the original fact of the universe itself—something behind which no man can go. The West may originate, the West may present new views of the prime fact—the East only seeks to give to a man that fact itself, the supreme consciousness, undifferentiated, the key to all that exists.

The Indian teachers, therefore, say there are as a rule three conditions of the attainment of Divine knowledge or *gñánam*—(1) The study of the sacred

books; (2) the help of a Guru; and (3) the verification of the tradition by one's own experience. Without this last the others are, of course, of no use; and the chief aid of the Guru is directed to the instruction of the pupil in the methods by which he may attain to personal experience. The sacred books give the philosophy and some of the experiences of the *gñáni* or illuminated person, but they do not, except in scattered hints, give instruction as to how this illumination is to be obtained. The truth is, it is a question of evolution; and it would neither be right that such instruction should be given to everybody, nor indeed possible, since even in the case of those prepared for it the methods must differ, according to the idiosyncrasy and character of the pupil.

There are apparently isolated cases in which individuals attain to *Gñánam* through their own spontaneous development, and without instruction from a Guru, but these are rare. As a rule, every man who is received into the body of Adepts receives his initiation through another Adept who himself received it from a forerunner, and the whole constitutes a kind of church or brotherhood with genealogical branches so to speak — the line of Adepts from which a man descends being imparted to him on his admission into the fraternity. I need not say that this resembles the methods of the ancient mysteries and initiations of classic times; and, indeed, the Indian teachers claim that the Greek and Egyptian and other Western schools of arcane lore were merely branches, more or less degenerate, of their own.

The course of preparation for Gñánam is called

yogam, and the person who is going through this stage is called a *yogi*—from the root *yog*, to join—one who is seeking junction with the universal spirit. Yogis are common all over India, and exist among all classes and in various forms. Some emaciate themselves and torture their bodies, others seek only control over their minds, some retire into the jungles and mountains, others frequent the cities and exhibit themselves in the crowded fairs, others again carry on the avocations of daily life with but little change of outward habit. Some are humbugs, led on by vanity or greed of gain (for to give to a holy man is highly meritorious); others are genuine students or philosophers; some are profoundly imbued with the religious sense; others by mere distaste for the world. The majority probably take to a wandering life of the body, some become wandering in mind; a great many attain to phases of clairvoyance and abnormal power of some kind or other, and a very few become Adepts of a high order.

Anyhow, the matter cannot be understood unless it is realised that this sort of religious retirement is thoroughly accepted and acknowledged all over India, and excites no surprise or special remark. Only some five or six years ago a relative * of the late Rajah of Tanjore—a man of some forty or fifty years of age, and one of the chief native personages in that part of India—made up his mind to become a devotee. He one day told his friends he was going on a railway journey, sent off his servants and carriages from the palace to the station, saying he would follow, gave them the slip, and has never been heard of since! His friends went to the man who

* Panjali Karama Sahib. This was in about 1885.

was known to have been acting as his Guru, who simply told them, "You will never find him." Supposing the G.O.M. or the Prince of Wales were to retire like this—how odd it would seem!

To illustrate this subject I may tell the story of Tilleináthan Swámy, who was the teacher of the Guru whose acquaintance I am referring to in this chapter. Tilleináthan was a wealthy shipowner of high family. In 1850 he devoted himself to religious exercises, till 1855, when he became "emancipated." After his attainment he felt sick of the world, and so he wound up his affairs, divided all his goods and money among relations and dependants, and went off stark naked into the woods. His mother and sisters were grieved, and repeatedly pursued him, offering to surrender all to him if he would only return. At last he simply refused to answer their importunities, and they desisted. He appeared in Tanjore after that in '57, '59, '64, and '72, but has not been seen since. He is supposed to be living somewhere in the Western Ghauts.

In '58 or '59, at the close of the Indian Mutiny, when search was being made for Nana Sahib, it was reported that the Nana was hiding himself under the garb (or no garb) of an "ascetic," and orders were issued to detain and examine all such people. Tilleináthan was taken and brought before the sub-magistrate at Kumbakónam, who told him the Government orders, and that he must dress himself properly. At the same time the sub-magistrate, having a friendly feeling for T. and guessing that he would refuse obedience, had brought a wealthy merchant with him, whom he had persuaded to stand bail for Tilleináthan in such emergency. When, however,

the merchant saw Tilleináthan, he expressed his doubts about standing bail for him—whereupon T. said, "Quite right, it is no good your standing bail for me; the English Government itself could not stand bail for one who creates and destroys Governments. I will be bail for myself." The sub-magistrate then let him go.

But on the matter being reported at headquarters the sub. was reprimanded, and a force, consisting of an inspector and ten men (natives of course), was sent to take Tilleináthan. He at first refused and threatened them, but on the inspector pleading that he would be dismissed if he returned with empty hands T. consented to come "in order to save the inspector." They came into full court—as it happened—before the collector (Morris), who immediately reprimanded T. for his mad costume! "It is you that are mad," said the latter, "not to know that this is my right costume,"—and he proceeded to explain the four degrees of Hindu probation and emancipation. (These are, of course, the four stages of student, householder, yogi, and gñáni. Every one who becomes a gñáni must pass through the other three stages. Each stage has its appropriate costume and rules; the yogi wears a yellow garment; the gñáni is emancipated from clothing, as well as from all other troubles.)

Finally, T. again told the collector that he was a fool, and that he, T., would punish him. "What will you do?" said the collector. "If you don't do justice I will burn you," was the reply! At this the mass of the people in court trembled, believing, no doubt, implicitly in T.'s power to fulfil his threat. The collector, however, told the inspector to read

the Lunacy Act to Tilleináthan, but the inspector's hand shook so that he could hardly see the words—till T. said, "Do not be afraid—I will explain it to you." He then gave a somewhat detailed account of the Act, pointed out to the collector that it did not apply to his own case, and ended by telling him once more that he was a fool. The collector then let him go!

Afterwards Morris—having been blamed for letting the man go—and Beauchamp (judge), who had been rather impressed already by T.'s personality, went together and with an escort to the house in Tanjore in which Tilleináthan was then staying—with an undefined intention, apparently, of arresting him. T. then asked them if they thought he was under their Government—to which the Englishmen replied that they were not there to argue philosophy but to enforce the law. T. asked how they would enforce it. "We have cannons and men behind us," said Morris. "And I," said T., "can also bring cannons and forces greater than yours." They then left him again, and he was no more troubled.

This story is a little disappointing in that no miracles come off, but I tell it as it was told to me by the Guru, and my friend A. having heard it substantially the same from other and independent witnesses at Tanjore, it may be taken as giving a fairly correct idea of the kind of thing that occasionally happens. No doubt the collector would look upon Tilleináthan as a "luny"—and from other stories I have heard of him (his utter obliviousness of ordinary conventionalities and proprieties, that he would lie down to sleep in the middle of the

street to the great inconvenience of traffic, that he would sometimes keep on repeating a single vacant phrase over and over again for half a day, etc.), such an opinion might, I should say, fairly be justified. Yet, at the same time, there is no doubt he was a very remarkable man, and the deep reverence with which our friend the Guru spoke of him was obviously not accorded merely to the abnormal powers which he seems at times to have manifested, but to the profundity and breadth of his teaching and the personal grandeur which prevailed through all his eccentricities.

It was a common and apparently instinctive practice with him to speak of the great operations of Nature, the thunder, the wind, the shining of the sun, etc., in the first person, "I"—the identification with, or non-differentiation from, the universe (which is the most important of esoteric doctrines) being in his case complete. So also the democratic character of his teaching surpassed even our Western records. He would take a pariah dog—the most scorned of creatures—and place it round his neck (compare the pictures of Christ with a lamb in the same attitude), or even let it eat out of one plate with himself! One day, in Kumbakónam, when importuned for instruction by five or six disciples, he rose up, and saying, "Follow me" went through the streets to the edge of a brook which divided the pariah village from the town—a line which no Hindu of caste will ever cross—and stepping over the brook bade them enter the defiled ground. This ordeal, however, his followers could not endure, and—except one—they all left him.

Tilleináthan's pupil, the teacher of whom I am presently speaking, is married, and has a wife and children. Most of these "ascetics" think nothing of abandoning their families when the call comes to them and going to the woods, perhaps never to be seen again. He, however, has not done this, but lives on quietly at home at Tanjore. Thirty or forty years ago he was a kind of confidential friend and adviser to the then reigning prince of Tanjore, and was well up in traditional state-craft and politics; and even only two or three years ago took quite an active interest in the National Indian Congress. His own name was Ramaswámy, but he acquired the name Ilákkanam, "the Grammarian," on account of his proficiency in Tamil grammar and philosophy, on which subject he was quite an authority, even before his initiation.

Tamil is a very remarkable, and, indeed, complex language—rivaling the Sanskrit in the latter respect. It belongs to the Dravidian group, and has few Aryan roots in it except what have been borrowed from Sanskrit. It contains, however, an extraordinary number of philosophical terms, of which some are Sanskrit in their origin, but many are entirely its own; and, like the people, it forms a strange blend of practical qualities with the most inveterate occultism. "Tamil," says the author of an article in the *Theosophist* for November '90, "is one of the oldest languages of India, if not of the world. Its birth and infancy are enveloped in mythology. As in the case of Sanskrit, we cannot say when Tamil became a literary language. The oldest Tamil works extant belong to a time, about 2000 years ago, of high and cultured refinement in Tamil poetic

literature. All the religious and philosophical poetry of Sanskrit has become fused into Tamil, which language contains a larger number of popular treatises in occultism, alchemy, etc., than even Sanskrit; and it is now the only spoken language of India that abounds in occult treatises on various subjects." Going on to speak of the Tamil Adepts, the author of this article says: "The popular belief is that there were eighteen brotherhoods of Adepts scattered here and there, in the mountains and forests of the Tamil country, and presided over by eighteen Sadhoos; and that there was a grand secret brotherhood composed of the eighteen Sadhoos, holding its meetings in the hills of the Agasthya Kútam in the Tinnevelly district. Since the advent of the English and their mountaineering and deforestation, these occultists have retired far into the interior of the thick jungles on the mountains; and a large number have, it is believed, altogether left these parts for more congenial places in the Himalayan ranges. It is owing to their influence that the Tamil language has been inundated, as it were, with a vast number of works on esoteric philosophy. The works of Agasthya Muni alone* would fill a whole library. The chief and only object of these brotherhoods has been to popularise esoteric truths and bring them home to the masses. So great and so extensive is their influence that the Tamil literature is permeated with esoteric truths in all its ramifications." In fact, the object of this article is to point out the vast number of proverbs and popular songs, circulating among the Tamils to-day, which conceal under frivolous guise the

* Or those ascribed to him.

most profound mystic truths. The grammar, too—as I suppose was the case in Sanskrit—is linked to the occult philosophy of the people.

To return to the Teacher, besides state-craft and grammar he is well versed in matters of law, and not unfrequently tackles a question of this kind for the help of his friends; and has some practical knowledge of medicine, as well as of cookery, which he considers important in its relation to health (the divine health, *Sukham*). It will thus be seen that he is a man of good practical ability and acquaintance with the world, and not a mere dreamer, as is too often assumed by Western critics to be the case with all those who seek the hidden knowledge of the East. In fact, it is one of the remarkable points of the Hindu philosophy that practical knowledge of life is expressly inculcated as a preliminary stage to initiation. A man must be a householder before he becomes a yogi; and familiarity with sexual experience is sometimes encouraged rather than reprobated, in order that having experienced one may in time pass beyond it. Indeed, it is not unfrequently maintained that the early marriage of the Hindus is advantageous in this respect, since a couple married at the age of fifteen or sixteen have, by the time they are forty, a grown-up family launched in life, and having circled worldly experience, are then free to dedicate themselves to the work of "emancipation."

During his *yoga* period, which lasted about three years, his wife was very good to him, and assisted him all she could. He was enjoined by his own teacher to refrain from speech, and did so for about a year and a half, passing most of his time in fixed

attitudes of meditation, and only clapping his hands when he wanted food, etc. Hardly anything shows more strongly the hold which these religious ideas have upon the people than the common willingness of the women to help their husbands in works of this kind, which, beside the sore inconvenience of them, often deprive the family of its very means of subsistence and leave it dependent on the help of relations and others. But so it is. It is difficult for a Westerner even to begin to realise the conditions and inspirations of life in the East.

Refraint from speech is not a necessary condition of initiation, but it is enjoined in some cases. (There might be a good many cases among the Westerners where it would be very desirable—with or without initiation!) "Many practising," said the Guru one day, "have not spoken for twelve years—so that when freed they had lost the power of speech—babbled like babies—and took some time to recover it. But for two or three years you experience no disability." "During my initiation," he added, "I often wandered about the woods all night, and many times saw wild beasts, but they never harmed me—as, indeed, they cannot harm the initiated."

At the present time he lives (when at home) a secluded life, mostly absorbed in trance conditions—his chief external interest, no doubt, being the teaching of such people as are led to him, or he is led to instruct. When, however, he takes up any practical work he throws himself into it with that power and concentration which is peculiar to a "Master," and which is the natural corollary of the power of abstraction when healthily used.

Among their own people these Gurus often have

small circles of disciples, who receive the instruction of their master, and in return are ever ready to attend upon his wants. Sometimes such little parties sit up all night alternately reading the sacred books and absorbing themselves in meditation. It appears that Ilákkanam's mother became his pupil and practised according to instruction, making good progress. One day, however, she told her son that she should die that night.* "What, are you ill?" he said. "No," she replied, "but I feel that I shall die." Then he asked her what she desired to be done with her body. "Oh, tie a rope to it and throw it out into the street," was her reply—meaning that it did not matter—a very strong expression, considering caste regulations on the subject. Nothing more was said, but that night at 3 A.M., as they and some friends were sitting up (cross-legged on the floor as usual) reading one of the sacred books, one of those present said, "But your mother does not move,"—and she was dead.

When in Ceylon our friend was only staying temporarily in a cottage, with a servant to look after him, and though exceedingly animated and vigorous as I have described, when once embarked in exposition — capable of maintaining his discourse for hours with unflagging concentration—yet the moment such external call upon his faculties was at an end, the interest that it had excited seemed to be entirely wiped from his mind; and the latter returned to that state of interior meditation and absorption in the contemplation of the world disclosed to the inner sense, which had apparently become his normal condition.

* "Go to the feet of the goddess Minakshi."

I was, in fact, struck, and perhaps a little shocked, by the want of interest in things and persons around him displayed by the great man—not that, as I have said, he was not very helpful and considerate in special cases—but evidently that part of his nature which held him to the actual world was thinning out; and the personalities of attendants and of those he might have casual dealings with, or even the scenes and changes of external nature, excited in him only the faintest response.

As I have said, he seemed to spend the greater part of the twenty-four hours wrapt in contemplation, and this not in the woods, but in the interior of his own apartment. As a rule, he only took a brief half-hour's walk mornings and evenings, just along the road and back again, and this was the only time he passed out of doors. Certainly this utter independence of external conditions—the very small amount of food and exercise and even of sleep that he took, combined with the great vigour that he was capable of putting forth on occasion both bodily and mentally, and the perfect control he had over his faculties—all seemed to suggest the idea of his having access to some interior source of strength and nourishment. And, indeed, the general doctrine that the gñáni can thus attain to independence and maintain his body from interior sources alone (eat of the "hidden manna") is one much cherished by the Hindus, and which our friend was never tired of insisting on.

Finally, his face, while showing the attributes of the seer, the externally penetrating quick eye, and the expression of *illumination*—the deep mystic light within—showed also the prevailing sentiment

of happiness behind it. *Sandósham, Sandósham eppótham* —"Joy, always joy"—was his own expression, oft repeated.

Perhaps I have now said enough to show—what, of course, was sufficiently evident to me—that, however it may be disguised under trivial or even in some cases repellent coverings, there *is* some reality beneath all these—some body of real experience, of no little value and importance, which has been attained in India by a portion at any rate of those who have claimed it, and which has been handed down now through a vast number of centuries among the Hindu peoples as their most cherished and precious possession.

CHAPTER II

CONSCIOUSNESS WITHOUT THOUGHT

THE question is, What is this experience? or rather —since an experience can really only be known to the person who experiences it—we may ask, "What is the nature of this experience?" And in trying to indicate an answer of some kind to this question I feel considerable diffidence, just for the very reason (for one) already mentioned—namely, that it is so difficult or impossible for one person to give a true account of an experience which has occurred to another. If I could give the exact words of the teacher, without any bias derived either from myself or the interpreting friend, the case might be different; but that I cannot pretend to do; and if I could, the old-world scientific forms in which his thoughts were cast would probably only prove a stumbling-block and a source of confusion, instead of a help, to the reader. Indeed, even in the case of the sacred books, where we have a good deal of accessible and authoritative information, Western critics, though for the most part agreeing that there *is* some real experience underlying, are sadly at variance as to what that experience may be.

For these reasons—while warning the reader that I do not pretend to give the exact teaching, absolutely unbiassed, of the Indian Gurus, or their experiences—I still will try to indicate as far as I

can, partly in my own words and partly in the words of the Gñáni, what I consider to be the gist and kernel of their doctrine, and the nature of that ancient and world-old knowledge which has had so stupendous an influence in the East.

And first let me guard against an error which is likely to arise. It is very easy to assume, and very frequently assumed, in any case where a person is credited with the possession of an unusual faculty, that such person is at once lifted out of our sphere into a supernatural region, and possesses every faculty of that region. If, for instance, he or she is or is supposed to be clairvoyant, it is assumed that *everything* is or ought to be known to them; or if the person has shown what seems a miraculous power at any time or in any case, it is asked by way of discredit why he or she did not show a like power at other times or in other cases. Against all such hasty generalisations it is necessary to guard ourselves. If there is a higher form of consciousness attainable by man than that which he for the most part can claim at present, it is probable, nay certain, that it is evolving and will evolve but slowly, and with many a slip and hesitant pause by the way. In the far past of man and the animals consciousness of sensation and consciousness of self have been successively evolved—each of these mighty growths with innumerable branches and branchlets continually spreading. At any point in this vast experience, a new growth, a new form of consciousness, might well have seemed miraculous. What could be more marvelous than the first revealment of the sense of sight, what more inconceivable to those who had not experienced it, and

what more certain than that the first use of this faculty must have been fraught with delusion and error? Yet there may be an inner vision which again transcends sight, even as far as sight transcends touch. It is more than probable that in the hidden births of time there lurks a consciousness which is not the consciousness of sensation and which is not the consciousness of self—or, at least, which includes and entirely surpasses these—a consciousness in which the contrast between the *ego* and the external world, and the distinction between subject and object, fall away. The part of the world into which such a consciousness admits us (call it *supramundane* or whatever you will) is probably at least as vast and complex as the part we know, and progress in that region at least equally slow and tentative and various, laborious, discontinuous, and uncertain. There is no sudden leap out of the back parlor onto Olympus; and the routes, when found, from one to the other, are long and bewildering in their variety.

And of those who do attain to some portion of this region, we are not to suppose that they are at once demi-gods, or infallible. In many cases, indeed, the very novelty and strangeness of the experiences give rise to phantasmal trains of delusive speculation. Though we should expect, and though it is no doubt true on the whole, that what we should call the higher types of existing humanity are those most likely to come into possession of any new faculties which may be flying about, yet it is not always so; and there are cases, well recognised, in which persons of decidedly deficient or warped moral nature attain powers which properly belong to a high grade

of evolution, and are correspondingly dangerous thereby.

All this, or a great part of it, the Indian teachers insist on. They say—and I think this commends the reality of their experience—that there is nothing abnormal or miraculous about the matter; that the faculties acquired are, on the whole, the result of long evolution and training, and that they have distinct laws and an order of their own. They recognise the existence of persons of a demoniac faculty, who have acquired powers of a certain grade without corresponding moral evolution; and they admit the rarity of the highest phases of consciousness and the fewness of those at present fitted for its attainment.

With these little provisos then established, I think we may go on to say that what the Gñáni seeks and obtains is a new order of consciousness—to which for want of a better we may give the name *universal* or *cosmic* consciousness, in contradistinction to the individual or special bodily consciousness with which we are all familiar. I am not aware that the *exact* equivalent of this expression "universal consciousness" is used in the Hindu philosophy; but the *Sat-chit-ánanda Brahm* to which every yogi aspires indicates the same idea: *sat*, the reality, the all pervading; *chit*, the knowing, perceiving; *ánanda*, the blissful—all these united in one manifestation of Brahm.

The West seeks the individual consciousness—the enriched mind, ready perceptions and memories, individual hopes and fears, ambitions, loves, conquests—the self, the local self, in all its phases and forms—and sorely doubts whether such a thing

as an universal consciousness exists. The East seeks the universal consciousness, and, in those cases where its quest succeeds, individual self and life thin away to a mere film, and are only the shadows cast by the glory revealed beyond.

The individual consciousness takes the form of *Thought*, which is fluid and mobile like quicksilver, perpetually in a state of change and unrest, fraught with pain and effort; the other consciousness is *not* in the form of Thought. It touches, sees, hears, and *is* those things which it perceives—without motion, without change, without effort, without distinction of subject and object, but with a vast and incredible Joy.

The individual consciousness is specially related to the body. The organs of the body are in some degree its organs. But the *whole* body is only as one organ of the cosmic consciousness. To attain this latter one must have the power of knowing one's self separate from the body, of passing into a state of *ecstasy* in fact. Without this the cosmic consciousness cannot be experienced.

It is said: "There are four main experiences in initiation—(1) the meeting with a Guru; (2) the consciousness of Grace, or *Arul* (which may perhaps be interpreted as the consciousness of a change—even of a physiological change—working within one); (3) the vision of Siva (God), with which the knowledge of one's self as distinct from the body is closely connected; (4) the finding of the universe within." "The wise," it is also said, "when their thoughts cease to move perceive within themselves the Absolute consciousness, which is *Sarva sakshi*, Witness of all things."

Great have been the disputes among the learned as to the meaning of the word Nirwana—whether it indicates a state of no-consciousness or a state of vastly enhanced consciousness. Probably both views have their justification : the thing does not admit of definition in the terms of ordinary language. The important thing to see and admit is that under cover of this and other similar terms there does exist a real and recognisable fact (that is, a state of consciousness in some sense), which has been experienced over and over again, and which to those who have experienced it in ever so slight a degree has appeared worthy of lifelong pursuit and devotion. It is easy, of course, to represent the thing as a mere word, a theory, a speculation of the dreamy Hindu ; but people do not sacrifice their lives for empty words, nor do mere philosophical abstractions rule the destinies of continents. No, the word represents a reality, something very basic and inevitable in human nature. The question really is not to define the fact—for we cannot do that—but to get at and experience it.

It is interesting at this juncture to find that modern Western science, which has hitherto—without much result—been occupying itself with mechanical theories of the universe, is approaching from its side this idea of the existence of another form of consciousness. The extraordinary phenomena of hypnotism—which, no doubt, are in some degree related to the subject we are discussing, and which have been recognised for ages in the East—are forcing Western scientists to assume the existence of the so-called *secondary consciousness* in the body. The phenomena seem really inexplicable

without the assumption of a secondary agency of some kind, and it every day becomes increasingly difficult *not* to use the word consciousness to describe it.

Let it be understood that I am not for a moment assuming that this secondary consciousness of the hypnotists is in all respects identical with the cosmic consciousness (or whatever we may call it) of the Eastern occultists. It may or may not be. The two kinds of consciousness may cover the same ground, or they may only overlap to a small extent. That is a question I do not propose to discuss. The point to which I wish to draw attention is that Western science is envisaging the possibility of the existence in man of another consciousness of some kind, beside that with whose working we are familiar. It quotes (A. Moll) the case of Barkworth, who "can add up long rows of figures while carrying on a lively discussion, without allowing his attention to be at all diverted from the discussion"; and asks us how Barkworth can do this unless he has a secondary consciousness which occupies itself with the figures while his primary consciousness is in the thick of argument. Here is a lecturer (F. Myers) who for a whole minute allows his mind to wander entirely away from the subject in hand, and imagines himself to be sitting beside a friend in the audience and to be engaged in conversation with *him*, and who wakes up to find himself still on the platform lecturing away with perfect ease and coherency. What are we to say to such a case as that? Here again is a pianist who recites a piece of music by heart, and finds that his recital is actually hindered by allowing his mind (his primary consciousness) to

dwell upon what he is doing. It is sometimes suggested that the very perfection of the musical performance shows that it is mechanical or unconscious, but is this a fair inference? and would it not seem to be a mere contradiction in terms to speak of an unconscious lecture or an unconscious addition of a row of figures?

Many actions and processes of the body—*e.g.* swallowing, are attended by distinct personal consciousness; many other actions and processes are quite unperceived by the same; and it might seem reasonable to suppose that these latter at anyrate were purely mechanical and devoid of any mental substratum. But the later developments of hypnotism in the West have shown—what is well known to the Indian fakirs—that under certain conditions consciousness of the internal actions and processes of the body can be obtained; and not only so, but consciousness of events taking place at a distance from the body and without the ordinary means of communication.

Thus the idea of another consciousness, in some respects of wider range than the ordinary one, and having methods of perception of its own, has been gradually infiltrating itself into Western minds.

There is another idea, which modern science has been familiarising us with, and which is bringing us towards the same conception—that, namely, of the fourth dimension. The supposition that the actual world has four space-dimensions instead of three makes many things conceivable which otherwise would be incredible. It makes it conceivable that apparently separate objects—*e.g.* distinct people—are really physically united; that things apparently sun-

dered by enormous distances of space are really quite close together; that a person or other object might pass in and out of a closed room without disturbance of walls, doors, or windows, etc.; and if this fourth dimension were to become a factor of our consciousness it is obvious that we should have means of knowledge which to the ordinary sense would appear simply miraculous. There is much apparently to suggest that the consciousness attained to by the Indian gñánis in their degree, and by hypnotic subjects in theirs, is of this fourth-dimensional order.

As a solid is related to its own surfaces, so, it would appear, is the cosmic consciousness related to the ordinary consciousness. The phases of the personal consciousness are but different facets of the other consciousness; and experiences which seem remote from each other in the individual are perhaps all equally near in the universal. Space itself, as we know it, may be practically annihilated in the consciousness of a larger space of which it is but the superficies; and a person living in London may not unlikely find that he has a backdoor opening quite simply and unceremoniously out in Bombay.

"The true quality of the soul," said the Guru one day, "is that of space, by which it is at rest, everywhere. But this space (Akása) within the soul is far above the ordinary material space. The whole of the latter, including all the suns and stars, appears to you then, as it were, but an atom of the former"—and here he held up his fingers as though crumbling a speck of dust between them.

"At rest everywhere," "Indifference," "Equality."

This was one of the most remarkable parts of the Guru's teaching. Though (for family reasons) maintaining many of the observances of caste himself, and though holding and teaching that for the mass of the people caste rules were quite necessary, he never ceased to insist that when the time came for a man (or woman) to be "emancipated" all these rules must drop aside as of no importance—all distinction of castes, classes, all sense of superiority or self-goodness—of right and wrong even—and the most absolute sense of Equality must prevail towards every one, and determination in its expression. Certainly it was remarkable (though I knew that the sacred books contained it) to find this germinal principle of Western democracy so vividly active and at work deep down beneath the innumerable layers of Oriental social life and custom. But so it is; and nothing shows better the relation between the West and the East than this fact.

This sense of Equality, of Freedom from regulations and confinements, of Inclusiveness, and of the Life that "rests everywhere," belongs, of course, more to the cosmic or universal part of man than to the individual part. To the latter it is always a stumbling-block and an offence. It is easy to show that men are not equal, that they cannot be free, and to point the absurdity of a life that is indifferent and at rest under all conditions. Nevertheless, to the larger consciousness these are basic facts, which underlie the common life of humanity, and feed the very individual that denies them.

Thus repeating the proviso that in using such terms as cosmic and universal consciousness we do not commit ourselves to the theory that the instant

a man leaves the personal part of him he enters into absolutely unlimited and universal knowledge, but only into a higher order of perception—and admitting the intricacy and complexity of the region so roughly denoted by these terms, and the microscopical character of our knowledge about it—we may say once more, also as a roughest generalisation, that the quest of the East has been this universal consciousness, and that of the West the personal or individual consciousness. As is well known, the East has its various sects and schools of philosophy, with subtle discriminations of qualities, essences, godheads, devilhoods, etc., into which I do not propose to go, and which I should feel myself quite incompetent to deal with. Leaving all these aside, I will keep simply to these two rough Western terms, and try to consider further the question of the *methods* by which the Eastern student sets himself to obtain the cosmic state, or such higher order of consciousness as he does encompass.

Paramaguru Swami.

CHAPTER III

METHODS OF ATTAINMENT

THE subject of the methods used by the yogis for the attainment of another order of consciousness has its physical, its mental, and its moral sides—and doubtless other sides as well.

Beginning with the physical side, it is probable that the discounting or repression of the physical brain—or of that part of it which is the seat of the primary consciousness—is the most important: on the theory that the repression of the primary consciousness opens the way for the manifestation of any other consciousness that may be present. Thus hypnotism lulls or fatigues the ordinary brain into a complete torpor—so allowing the phenomena connected with the secondary consciousness to come out into the greater prominence. It need not be supposed that hypnotism *induces* the secondary consciousness, but only that it removes that other consciousness which ordinarily conceals or hinders its expression. Some of the methods adopted by the yogis are undoubtedly of this hypnotic character, such as the sitting or standing for long periods absolutely fixed in one position; staring at the sun or other object; repeating a word or phrase over and over again for thousands of times, etc.; and the clairvoyant and other results produced seem in many respects very similar to the results of Western

hypnotism. The yogi, however, by immense persistence in his practices, and by using his own will to effect the change of consciousness, instead of surrendering himself into the power of another person, seems to be able to transfer his "I" or *ego* into the new region, and to remember on his return to ordinary consciousness what he has seen there; whereas the hypnotic subject seems to be divided into a double *ego*, and as a rule remembers nothing in the primary state of what occurred to him in the secondary.

Others of the yogis adopt prolonged fasting, abstinence from sleep, self-torture, and emaciation, with the same object—namely, the reduction of the body, and apparently with somewhat similar results—though in these cases not only insight is supposed to be gained, but added powers over nature, arising from the intense forces of control put forth and educed by these exercises. The fact that the *Siddhi* or miraculous powers can be gained in this way is so universally accepted and taken for granted in India that (even after making all allowances) it is difficult not to be carried away on the stream of belief. And, indeed, when one considers the known powers of the will—cultivated as it is to but a feeble degree amongst most of us—there seems to be an inherent probability in the case. The Adepts, however, as a rule, though entirely agreeing that the attainment of the Siddhi powers is *possible*, strongly condemn the quest of them by these methods—saying with great justice that the mere fact of a quest of this kind is a breach of the law of Indifference and Trust, and that the quest being instigated by some desire—ambition, spiritual pride, love of

gain, or what not—necessarily ends either by stultifying itself, or by feeding the desire, and, if some powers are gained, by the devotion of them to evil ends.

Thus the methods that are mainly physical produce certain results—clairvoyances and controls—which are largely physical in their character, and are probably for the most part more or less morbid and dangerous. They are, however, very widely spread among the inferior classes of yogis all over India, and the performances which spring from them, by exciting the fear and wonder of the populace, often become—as in the case of mesmeric performances in the West—a source of considerable gain to the chief actor.

There remain two other classes of methods—the mental and the moral.

Of the mental no doubt the most important is the Suppression of Thought—and it is not unlikely that this may have, when once understood, a far-reaching and important influence on our Western life—overridden and dominated as it is by a fever of Thought which it can by no means control. Nothing, indeed, strikes one more as marking the immense contrast between the East and the West than, after leaving Western lands, where the ideal of life is to have an almost insanely active brain and to be perpetually on the war-path with fearful and wonderful projects and plans and purposes, to come to India and to find its leading men—men of culture and learning and accomplishment—deliberately passing beyond all these and addressing themselves to the task of effacing their own thoughts, effacing all their own projects and purposes in order

that the diviner consciousness may enter in and occupy the room so prepared.

The effacement of projects and purposes—which comes to much the same thing as the control of desire—belongs more properly to the *moral* side of the question, and may be considered later on. The subjection of Thought—which obviously is very closely connected with the subjection of Desire—may, however, be considered here.

The *Gñana-yogis* (so called to distinguish them from the *Karma-yogis*, who rely more upon the external and physical methods) adopt two practices—(1) that of intense concentration of the thoughts on a fixed object; (2) that of the effacement of thought altogether.

(1) The thoughts may be fixed on a definite object—for instance, on one's own breathing—the inflow and outflow of the atmosphere through the channels of the physical body. The body must be kept perfectly still and motionless for a long period—so that it may pass entirely out of consciousness—and the thoughts fixed on the regulated calm tide of respiration, to the complete exclusion of every other subject. Or the name of an object—a flower, for instance—may be repeated incessantly—the image of the object being called up at the same time—till at last the name and the image of the object blend and become indistinguishable in the mind.

Such practices have their literal and their spiritual sides. If carried out merely as formulæ, they evidently partake of a mesmeric (self-mesmeric) character, and ultimately induce mesmeric states of consciousness.* If carried out with a strong sense of

* The Rev. H. Callaway, in a paper on "Divination among

their inner meaning—the presence of the vast cosmic life in the breathing, the endeavor to realise Brahma himself in the flower or other object contemplated—they naturally induce a deeper sense of the universal life and consciousness than that which belongs to the mesmeric state. Anyhow, they teach a certain power and control over the thoughts; and it is a doctrine much insisted on by the Gurus that in life generally the habit of the undivided concentration of the mind on that which one is doing is of the utmost importance. The wandering of the mind, its division and distraction, its openness to attack by brigand cares and anxieties, its incapacity to heartily enjoy itself in its work, not only lame and cripple and torment it in every way, but are a mark of the want of that faith which believes in the Now as the divine moment, and takes no thought for the Morrow. To concentrate at all times wholly and unreservedly in what you are doing at the moment is, they say, a distinct step in Gñánam.

(2) The next step, the effacement of Thought, is a much more difficult one. Only when the power of concentration has been gained can this be attempted with any prospect of success. The body must be kept, as before, perfectly motionless, and in a quiet place, free from disturbance; not in an attitude of ease or slumber, but sitting or standing erect with muscles tense. All will-power is required, and the greatest vigilance. Every thought must be de-

the Natives of Natal" (*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vol. i. p. 176), says that the natives, "in order to become clairvoyant, attempt to effect intense concentration and abstraction of the mind—an abstraction even from their own thoughts." And this is done by herdsmen and chiefs alike—though, of course, with varying success.

stroyed on the instant of its appearance. But the enemy is subtle, and failure—over a long period—inevitable. Then when success seems to be coming and Thought is dwindling, Oblivion, the twin-foe, appears and must also be conquered. For if Thought merely gives place to Sleep, what is there gained? After months, but more probably years, of intermittent practice the power of control grows; curious but distinct physiological changes take place; one day the student finds that Thought has gone: he stands for a moment in Oblivion; then *that* veil lifts, and there streams through his being a vast and illumined consciousness, glorious, that fills and overflows him, "surrounding him so that he is like a pot in water, which has the liquid within it and without." In this consciousness there is divine knowledge but no thought. It is *Samádhi*, the universal "I Am."

Whatever people may think of the reality of this "Samádhi," of the genuineness or the universality of the consciousness obtained in it, etc. (and these are questions which, of course, require examination), it is incontestable that for centuries and centuries it has been an object of the most strenuous endeavor to vast numbers even of the very acutest and most capable intellects of India. Earthly joys paled before this ecstasy; the sacred literatures are full of its praise. That there lurks here some definite and important fact of experience is, I think, obvious—though it is quite probable that it is not yet really understood, either by the East that discovered it or the West that has criticised it.

Leaving, however, for the present the consideration of this ultimate and transcendent result of the effacement of Thought, and freely admitting that the

Eastern devotees have in the ardor of their pursuit of it been often led into mere absurdities and excesses—that they have in some cases practically mutilated their thinking powers—that they have refrained from speech for such prolonged years that at last not only the tongue but the brain itself refused to act—that they have in instances reduced themselves to the condition of idiots and babbling children, and rendered themselves incapable of carrying on any kind of work ordinarily called useful—admitting all this, it still remains true, I think, that even in its lower aspects this doctrine is of vast import to-day in the West.

For we moderns, while we have dominated Nature and external results in the most extraordinary way through our mechanical and other sciences, have just neglected this other field of mastery over our own internal mechanism. We pride ourselves on our athletic feats, but some of the performances of the Indian fakirs in the way of mastery over the *internal* processes of the body—processes which in ordinary cases have long ago lapsed into the region of the involuntary and unconscious—such as holding the breath over enormous periods, or reversing the peristaltic action of the alimentary canal throughout its entire length—are so astonishing that for the most part the report of them only excites incredulity among us, and we can hardly believe—what I take it is a fact—that these physiological powers have been practised till they are almost reduced to a science.

And if we are unwilling to believe in this internal mastery over the body, we are perhaps almost equally unaccustomed to the idea of mastery over

our own inner thoughts and feelings. That a man should be a prey to any thought that chances to take possession of his mind is commonly among us assumed as unavoidable. It may be a matter of regret that he should be kept awake all night from anxiety as to the issue of a lawsuit on the morrow, but that he should have the power of determining whether he be kept awake or not seems an extravagant demand. The image of an impending calamity is no doubt odious, but its very odiousness (we say) makes it haunt the mind all the more pertinaciously—and it is useless to try to expel it.

Yet this is an absurd position for man, the heir of all the ages, to be in: hag-ridden by the flimsy creatures of his own brain. If a pebble in our boot torments us we expel it. We take off the boot and shake it out. And once the matter is fairly understood it is just as easy to expel an intruding and obnoxious thought from the mind. About this there ought to be no mistake, no two opinions. The thing is obvious, clear, and unmistakable. It should be as easy to expel an obnoxious thought from your mind as to shake a stone out of your shoe; and till a man can do that, it is just nonsense to talk about his ascendancy over Nature, and all the rest of it. He is a mere slave and a prey to the bat-winged phantoms that flit through the corridors of his own brain.

Yet the weary and careworn faces that we meet by thousands, even among the affluent classes of civilisation, testify only too clearly how seldom this mastery is obtained. How rare, indeed, to meet a *man*! How common rather to discover a creature hounded on by tyrant thoughts (or cares or de-

sires), cowering, wincing under the lash—or perchance priding himself to run merrily in obedience to a driver that rattles the reins and persuades him that he is free—whom we cannot converse with in careless *tête-à-tête* because that alien presence is always there, on the watch.

It is one of the most prominent doctrines of the Gñánis that the power of expelling thoughts, or if need be, of killing them dead on the spot, *must* be attained. Naturally the art requires practice; but like other arts, when once acquired, there is no more mystery or difficulty about it. And it is worth practice. It may, indeed, fairly be said that life only begins when this art has been acquired. For obviously, when instead of being ruled by individual thoughts, the whole flock of them in their immense multitude and variety and capacity is ours to direct and despatch and employ where we list ("for He maketh the winds his messengers and the flaming fire his minister"), life becomes a thing so vast and grand compared with what it was before that its former condition may well appear almost antenatal.

If you can kill a thought dead, for the time being, you can do anything else with it that you please. And therefore it is that this power is so valuable. And it not only frees a man from mental torment (which is nine-tenths at least of the torment of life), but it gives him a concentrated power of handling mental work absolutely unknown to him before. The two things are correlative to each other. As already said, this is one of the principles of Gñánam. While at work your thought is to be absolutely concentrated in it, undistracted by anything whatever irrelevant to the matter in hand—pounding away

like a great engine, with giant power and perfect economy—no wear and tear of friction, or dislocation of parts, owing to the working of different forces at the same time. Then, when the work is finished, if there is no more occasion for the use of the machine, it must stop equally absolutely—stop entirely—no *worrying* (as if a parcel of boys were allowed to play their devilments with a locomotive as soon as it was in the shed)—and the man must retire into that region of his consciousness where his true self dwells.

I say the power of the thought-machine itself is enormously increased by this faculty of letting it alone on the one hand and of using it singly and with concentration on the other. It becomes a true tool, which a master-workman lays down when done with, but which only a bungler carries about with him all the time to show that he is the possessor of it.

Then on and beyond the work turned out by the tool itself is the knowledge that comes to us apart from its use: when the noise of the workshop is over, and mallet and plane laid aside—the faint sounds coming through the open window from the valley and the far seashore: the dim fringe of diviner knowledge, which begins to grow, poor thing, as soon as the eternal click-clack of thought is over—the extraordinary intuitions, perceptions, which, though partaking in some degree of the character of thought, spring from entirely different conditions, and are the forerunners of a changed consciousness.

At first they appear miraculous, but it is not so. They are not miraculous, for they are always there.

(The stars are always there.) It is we who are miraculous in our inattention to them. In the systemic or secondary or cosmic consciousness of man (I daresay all these ought to be distinguished, but I lump them together for the present) lurk the most minute and varied and far-reaching intuitions and perceptions—some of them in their swiftness and subtlety outreaching even those of the primary consciousness—but to them we do not attend, because Thought, like a pied piper, is ever capering and fiddling in front of us. And when Thought is gone, lo! we are asleep. To open your eyes in that region which is neither Night nor Day is to behold strange and wonderful things.

As already said, the subjection of Thought is closely related to the subjection of Desire, and has consequently its specially moral as well as its specially intellectual relation to the question in hand. Nine-tenths of the scattered or sporadic thought with which the mind usually occupies itself when not concentrated on any definite work is what may be called self-thought—thought of a kind which dwells on and exaggerates the sense of self. This is hardly realised in its full degree till the effort is made to suppress it; and one of the most excellent results of such an effort is that with the stilling of all the phantoms which hover round the lower self, one's relations to others, to one's friends, to the world at large, and one's perception of all that is concerned in these relations, come out into a purity and distinctness unknown before. Obviously, while the mind is full of the little desires and fears which concern the local self, and is clouded over by the

thought-images which such desires and fears evoke, it is impossible that it should see and understand the greater facts beyond and its own relation to them. But with the subsiding of the former the great Vision begins to dawn; and a man never feels less alone than when he has ceased to think whether he is alone or not.

It is in this respect that the subjection of desire is really important. There is no necessity to suppose that desire, in itself, is an evil; indeed, it is quite conceivable that it may fall into place as a useful and important element of human nature—though certainly one whose importance will be found to dwindle and gradually disappear as time goes on. The trouble for us is, in our present state, that desire is liable to grow to such dimensions as to overcloud the world for us, emprison, and shut us out from inestimable Freedom beneath its sway. Under such circumstances it evidently is a nuisance, and has to be dominated. No doubt certain sections of the Indian and other ascetic philosophies have taught the absolute extinction of desire, but we may fairly regard these as cases—so common in the history of all traditional teaching—of undue prominence given to a special detail, and of the exaltation of the letter of the doctrine above the spirit.

The moral element (at which we have now arrived) in the attainment of a higher order of consciousness is, of course, recognised by all the great Indian teachers as of the first importance. The sacred books, the sermons of Buddha, the discourses of the present-day Gurus, all point in the same direction. Gentleness, forbearance towards all, abstention from giving pain, especially to the animals, the

recognition of the divine spirit in every creature down to the lowest, the most absolute sense of equality and the most absolute candor, an undisturbed serene mind, free from anger, fear, or any excessive and tormenting desire — these are all insisted on.

Thus though physical and mental conditions are held—and rightly—to be important, the moral conditions are held to be at least equally important. Nevertheless, in order to guard against misconception, which in so complex a subject may easily arise, it is necessary to state here—what I have hinted before—that different sections and schools among the devotees place a very different respective value upon the three sets of conditions—some making more of the physical, others of the mental, and others again of the moral—and that, as may be easily guessed, the results attained by the various schools differ considerably in consequence.

The higher esoteric teachers naturally lay the greatest stress on the moral, but any account of their methods would be defective which passed over or blinked the fact that they go *beyond* the moral—because this fact is in some sense of the essence of the Oriental inner teaching. Morality, it is well understood, involves the conception of oneself as distinct from others, as distinct from the world, and presupposes a certain antagonism between one's own interests and those of one's fellows. One "sacrifices" one's own interests to those of another, or "goes out of one's way" to help him. All such ideas must be entirely left behind if one is to reach the central illumination. They spring from ignorance, and are the products of darkness. On no

word did the "Grammarian" insist more strongly than on the word Non-differentiation. You are not even to differentiate yourself in thought from others; you are not to begin to regard yourself as separate from them. Even to talk about helping others is a mistake; it is vitiated by the delusion that you and they are twain. So closely does the subtle Hindu mind go to the mark! What would our bald commercial philanthropy, our sleek æsthetic altruism, our scientific isophily, say to such teaching? All the little self-satisfactions which arise from the sense of duty performed, all the cheese-parings of equity between oneself and others, all the tiny wonderments whether you are better or worse than your neighbour, have to be abandoned; and you have to learn to live in a world in which the chief fact is *not* that you are distinct from others, but that you are a part of and integral with them. This involves, indeed, a return to the communal order of society, and difficult as this teaching is for us in this day to realise, yet there is no doubt that it must lie at the heart of the Democracy of the future, as it has lain, germinal, all these centuries in the hidden womb of the East.

Nor from Nature. You are not to differentiate yourself from Nature. We have seen that the Guru Tilleináthan spoke of the operations of the external world as "I," having dismissed the sense of difference between himself and them. It is only under these, and such conditions as these, that the little mortal creature gradually becomes aware of What he is.

This non-differentiation is the final deliverance. When it enters in the whole burden of absurd cares,

anxieties, duties, motives, desires, fears, plans, purposes, preferences, etc., rolls off and lies like mere lumber on the ground. The winged spirit is free, and takes its flight. It passes through the veil of mortality and leaves that behind. Though I say this non-differentiation is the final deliverance (from the bonds of illusion), I do not say it is the final experience. Rather I should be inclined to think it is only the beginning of many experiences. As, in the history of man and the higher animals, the consciousness of self—the local self—has been the basis of an enormous mass of perceptions, intuitions, joys, sufferings, etc., incalculable and indescribable in multitudinousness and variety, so, in the history of man and the angels, will the consciousness of the cosmic and universal life—the true self underlying—become the basis of another and far vaster knowledge.

There is one respect in which the specially Eastern teaching commonly appears to us Westerners—and on the whole I am inclined to think justly—defective; and that is in its little insistence on the idea of Love. While, as already said, a certain gentleness and forbearance and passive charity is a decided feature of Indian teaching and life, one cannot help noting the absence—or less prominence, at anyrate—of that positive spirit of love and human helpfulness which in some sections of Western society might almost be called a devouring passion. Though with plentiful exceptions, no doubt, yet there is a certain quiescence and self-inclusion and absorbedness in the Hindu ideal, which amounts almost to coldness; and this is the more curious, because Hindu society—till within the last few years at any-

rate—has been based upon the most absolutely communal foundation. But perhaps this fact of the communal structure of society in India is just the reason why the social sentiment does not seek impetuously for expression there; while in Europe, where existing institutions are a perpetual denial of it, its expression becomes all the more determined and necessary. However that may be, I think the fact may be admitted of a difference between the East and West in this respect. Of course, I am not speaking of those few who may attain to the consciousness of non-differentiation, because in their case the word love must necessarily change its meaning; nor am I speaking of the specially individual and sexual and amatory love, in which there is no reason to suppose the Hindus deficient; but I am rather alluding to the fact that in the West we are in the habit of looking on devotion to other humans (widening out into the social passion) as the most natural way of losing one's self-limitations and passing into a larger sphere of life and consciousness: while in the East this method is little thought of or largely neglected, in favor of the concentration of oneself in the divine, and mergence in the universal in that way.

I think this contrast—taking it quite roughly—may certainly be said to exist. The Indian teachers, the sacred books, the existing instruction, centre consciously or unconsciously round the development of Will-power. By will to surrender the will; by determination and concentration to press inward and upward to that portion of one's being which belongs to the universal, to conquer the body, to conquer the thoughts, to conquer the passions and

emotions; always will, and will-power. And here again we have a paradox, because in their quiescent, gentle, and rather passive external life—so different from the push and dominating energy of the Western nations—there is little to make one expect such force. But while modern Europe and America has spent its Will in the mastery of the external world, India has reserved hers for the conquest of inner and spiritual kingdoms. In their hypnotic phenomena, too, the yogis exhibit the force of will, and this differentiates their hypnotism from that of the West, in which the patient is operated upon by another person. In the latter there is a danger of loss of will-power, but in the former (auto-hypnotism) will-power is no doubt gained, while at the same time hypnotic states are induced. Suggestion, which is such a powerful agent in hypnotism, acts here too, and helps to knit the body together, pervading it with a healing influence, and bringing the lower self under the direct domination of the higher; and in this respect the Guru to some extent stands in the place of the operator, while the yogi is his subject.

Thus in the East the Will constitutes the great path; but in the West the path has been more specially through Love—and probably will be. The great teachers of the West—Plato, Jesus, Paul—have indicated this method rather than that of the ascetic will; though, of course, there have not been wanting exponents of both sides. The one method means the gradual dwindling of the local and external self through inner concentration and aspiration, the other means the enlargement of the said self through affectional growth and nourishment, till at last it can contain itself no longer. The bursting of

the sac takes place ; the life is poured out, and, ceasing to be local, becomes universal. Of this method Whitman forms a signal instance. He is egotistic enough in all conscience ; yet at last, through his immense human sympathy, and through the very enlargement of his *ego* thus taking place, the barriers break down and he passes out and away.

"O Christ! This is mastering me!
In at the conquered doors they crowd. I am possessed.
. . . . . .
I embody all presences outlawed or suffering;
See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.
. . . . . .
Enough! enough! enough!
Somehow I have been stunned. Stand back!
Give me a little time beyond my cuffed head, slumbers, dreams, gaping;
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.
That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears, and the blows of bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and bloody crowning."

But such expressions as these — in which the passion of humanity wraps the speaker into another sphere of existence—are *not* characteristic of the East, and are not found in the Indian scriptures. When its time comes the West will probably adopt this method of the liberation of the human soul—through Love — rather than the specially Indian method—of the Will ; though doubtless both have to be, and will be, in the future to a large extent concurrently used. Different races and peoples incline according to their idiosyncrasies to different

ways ; each individual even—as is quite recognised by the present-day Gurus—has his special line of approach to the supreme facts. It is possible that when the Western races once realise what lies beneath this great instinct of humanity, which seems in some ways to be their special inspiration, they will outstrip even the Hindus in their entrance to and occupation of the new fields of consciousness.

CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONS OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM-RELIGION

I HAVE dwelt so far on the nature of certain experiences (which I have not, however, attempted to describe) and on the methods by which, specially in India, they are sought to be obtained; and I have done so in general terms, and with an endeavor to assimilate the subject to Western ideas and to bring it into line with modern science and speculation. I propose in this chapter to dwell more especially on the formal side of our friend's teaching, which will bring out into relief the special character of Eastern thought and its *differences* from our present-day modes of thought.

I must, however, again warn the reader against accepting anything I say, except with care and reserve, and especially not to broaden out into sweeping generalities any detailed statement I may happen to make. People often ask for some concise account of Indian teaching and religion. Supposing someone were to ask for a concise account of the Christian teaching and religion, which of us, with all our familiarity with the subject, could give an account which the others would accept? From the question whether Jesus and Paul were initiates in the Eastern mysteries—as the modern Gurus claim that they were, and as I think there can be no doubt that they were—either by tradition or by

spontaneous evolution; through the question of the similarity and differences of their teaching; the various schools of early Christianity; the Egyptian influences; the Gnostic sects and philosophy; the formation and history of the Church, its organisations, creeds, and doctrines; mediæval Christianity and its relation to Aristotle; the mystic teachers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the ascetic and monastic movements; the belief in alchemy and witchcraft; the miracles of the Saints; the Protestant movement and doctrines, etc. etc.; down to the innumerable petty sects of to-day and all their conflicting views on the Atonement and the sacraments and the inspiration of the Bible, and all the rest of it—who would be so bold as to announce the gist and *résumé* of it all in a few brief sentences? Yet the great Indian evolution of religious thought—while historically more ancient—is at least equally vast and complex and bewildering in its innumerable ramifications. I should feel entirely incompetent to deal with it as a whole—and here, at anyrate, am only touching upon the personality and utterances of one teacher, belonging to a particular school, the South Indian.

This Guru was, as I have said, naturally one of those who insisted largely — though not by any means exclusively—on the moral and ultra-moral sides of the teaching; and from this point of view his personality was particularly remarkable. His gentleness and kindliness, combined with evident power; and inflexibility and intensity underlying; his tense eyes, as of the seer, and gracious lips and expression, and ease and dignity of figure; his entire serenity and calm — though with lots of

vigor when needed — all these were impressive. But perhaps I was most struck—as the culmination of character and manhood—by his perfect simplicity of manner. Nothing could be more unembarrassed, unselfconscious, direct to the point in hand, free from kinks of any kind. Sometimes he would sit on his sofa-couch in the little cottage, not unfrequently, as I have said, with bare feet gathered beneath him; sometimes he would sit on a chair at the table; sometimes in the animation of discourse his muslin wrap would fall from his shoulder, unnoticed, showing a still graceful figure, thin, but by no means emaciated; sometimes he would stand for a moment, a tall and dignified form; yet always with the same ease and grace and absence of self-consciousness that only the animals and a few among human beings show. It was this that made him seem very near to one, as if the ordinary barriers which divide people were done away with; and if this was non-differentiation working within, its external effect was very admirable.

I dwell perhaps the more on these points of character, which made me feel an extraordinary *rapprochement* and unspoken intimacy to this man, because I almost immediately found on acquaintance that on the plane of ordinary thought and scientific belief we were ever so far asunder, with only a small prospect, owing to difficulties of language, etc., of ever coming to an understanding. I found—though this, of course, gave a special interest to his conversation—that his views of astronomy, physiology, chemistry, politics, and the rest, were entirely unmodified by Western thought and science—and that they had come down through a long line of oral

tradition, continually reinforced by references to the sacred books, from a most remote antiquity. Here was a man who, living in a native principality under an Indian rajah, and skilled in the learning of his own country, had probably come across very few English at all till he was of mature years, had not learned the English language, and had apparently troubled himself but little about Western ideas of any kind. I am not a stickler for modern science myself, and think many of its conclusions very shaky; but I confess it gave me a queer feeling when I found a man of so subtle intelligence and varied capacity calmly asserting that the earth was the centre of the physical universe and that the sun revolved about it! With all seriousness he turned out the theory (which old Lactantius *Indicopleustes* introduced from the East into Europe about the third century A.D.)—namely, that the earth is flat, with a great hill, the celebrated Mount Meru, in the north, behind which the sun and moon and other heavenly bodies retire in their order to rest. He explained that an eclipse of the moon (then going on) was caused by one of the two "dark planets," Raku or Kètu (which are familiar to astrology), concealing it from view. He said (and this is also an ancient doctrine) that there were 1008 solar or planetary systems similar to ours, some *above* the earth, some *below*, and some on either hand. As to the earth itself, it had been destroyed and re-created many times in successive æons, but there had never been a time when the divine knowledge had not existed on it. There had always been an Indian (*gñána bhumi*, or Wisdom-land, in contra-distinction to the Western *bhoga bhumi*, or land of

pleasure), and always Vedas or Upanishads (or books corresponding) brought by divine teachers. (About modern theories of submerged continents and lower races in the far past he did not appear to know anything or to have troubled his head, nor did he put forth any views on this subject of the kind mentioned by Sinnett in his *Esoteric Buddhism.* Many of his views, however, were very similar to those given in that book.)

His general philosophy appeared to be that of the Siddhantic system, into which I do not propose to go in any detail, as it may be found in the books; and all such systems are hopelessly dull, and may be said to carry their own death-warrants written on their faces. The Indian systems of philosophy bear a strong resemblance to the Gnostic systems of early Christian times, which latter were no doubt derived from the East. They all depend upon the idea of emanation, which is undoubtedly an important idea, and corresponds to some remarkable facts of consciousness; but the special forms in which the idea is cast in the various systems are not very valuable.

The universe in the Siddhantic system is composed of five elements—(1) ether; (2) air; (3) fire; (4) water; and (5) earth; and to get over the obvious difficulties which arise from such a classification, it is explained that these are not the *gross* ether, air, fire, water, and earth that we know, but *subtle* elements of the same name, which are themselves perfectly pure, but by their admixture produce the gross elements. Thus the air we know is not a true element, but is formed by a mixture of the subtle air, with small portions of the subtle ether,

subtle fire, subtle water, and subtle earth, and so on. This explains how it is there may be various kinds of air or of water or of earth. Then the five subtle elements give rise to the five forms of sensation in the order named—(1) Sound; (2) Touch; (3) Sight; (4) Taste; (5) Smell; and to the five corresponding organs of sense. Also, there are five intellectual faculties evolved by admixture from the subtle elements, namely—(1) the inner consciousness, which has the quality of ether or space; (2) the organ of perception and Thought (*manas*), which has the quality of aërial agitation and motion; (3) Reason (*buddhi*), which has the quality of light and fire; (4) Desire (*chittam*), which has the emotional rushing character of water; (5) the I-making faculty (*ahankára*), which has the hardness and resistance of the earth. Also the five organs of action—the voice, the hands, the feet, the anus, and the penis—in the same order; and the five vital airs which are supposed to pervade the different parts of the body and to impel their action.

This is all very neat and compact. Unfortunately, it shares the artificial character which all systems of philosophy have, and which makes it quite impossible to accept any of them. I think our friend quite recognised this, for more than once he said, and quoted the sacred books to the same effect, that "Everything which can be thought is untrue." In this respect the Indian philosophy altogether excels our Western systems (except the most modern). It takes the bottom out of its own little bucket in the most impartial way.

Nevertheless, whatever faults they may have, and however easy it may be to attack their thought-

forms, the great Indian systems (and those of the West the same) are no doubt based upon deep-lying facts of consciousness, which it must be our business some time to disentangle. I believe there are facts of consciousness underlying such unlikely things as the evolution of the five subtle elements, even though the *form* of the doctrine may be largely fantastic. The primal element, according to this doctrine, is the ether or *space* (*Akása*), the two ideas of space and ether being curiously identified, and the other elements—air, fire, etc.—are evolved in succession from this one by a process of thickening or condensation. Now this consciousness of space—not the material space, but the space within the soul—is a form of the supreme consciousness in man, the *sat-chit-ánanda* Brahm—Freedom, Equality, Extension, Omnipresence—and is accompanied by a sense which has been often described as a combination of all the senses—sight, hearing, touch, etc.—in one, so that they do not even appear differentiated from each other. In the course of the descent of the consciousness from this plane to the plane of ordinary life (which may be taken to correspond to the creation of the actual world) the transcendent space-consciousness goes through a sort of obscuration or condensation, and the senses become differentiated into separate and distinct faculties. This—or something like it—is a distinct experience. It may well be that the formal doctrine about the five elements is merely an attempt necessarily very defective, since these things *cannot* be adequately expressed in that way—to put the thing into a form of thought. And so with other doctrines: some may contain a real

inhalt, others may be merely ornamental thought-fringes, put on for the sake of logical symmetry, or what not. In its *external* sense the doctrine of the evolution of the other elements successively by condensation from the ether is after all not so far removed from our modern scientific ideas. For the chief difference between the air, and other such gases, and the ether is supposed by us to be the closeness of the particles in the former; then in the case of fire, the particles come into violent contact, producing light and heat; in fluids their contact has become continuous though mobile; and in the earth and other solids their contact is fixed.

However, whatever justification the formal analysis of man and the external world into their constituent parts may have or require, the ultimate object of the analysis in the Indian philosophy is to convince the pupil that He is a being apart from them all. "He whose perception is obscured mistakes the twenty-six *tatwas* (categories or 'thats') for himself, and is under the illusions of 'I' and 'mine.' To be liberated by the grace of a proper spiritual teacher from the operation of this obscuring power, and to realise that these are not self, constitute 'deliverance.'" Here is the ultimate fact of consciousness, which is the same, and equally true, whatever the analysis of the *tatwas* may be.

"The true quality of the Soul is that of space, by which it is at rest, everywhere. Then," continued the Guru, "comes the Air-quality, by which it moves with speed from place to place; then the Fire-quality, by which it discriminates; then the Water-quality, which gives it emotional flow; and then the Earth or self-quality, rigid and unyielding.

As these things evolve out of the soul, so they must involve again, into it and into Brahm."

To go with the five elements, etc., the system expounded by the Guru supposes five shells enclosing the soul. These, with the soul itself, and Brahm, the undifferentiated spirit lying within the soul, form seven planes or sections, as in the Esoteric Buddhism of Sinnett and the Theosophists. The divisions, however, are not quite identical in the two systems, which appear to be respectively North Indian and South Indian. In the North Indian we have (1) the material body; (2) the vitality; (3) the astral form; (4) the animal soul; (5) the human soul; (6) the soul proper; and (7) the undifferentiated spirit.[ii] In the South Indian we have (1) the material shell; (2) the shell of the vital airs; (3) the sensorial shell; (4) the cognitional shell; (5) the shell of oblivion and bliss in sleep; (6) the soul; and (7) the undifferentiated spirit. The two extremes seem the same in the two systems, but the intermediate layers differ. In some respects the latter system is the more effective; it has a stronger practical bearing than the other, and appears to be specially designed as a guide to action in the work of emancipation. In some respects the other system has a wider application. Neither, of course, have any particular value except as convenient forms of thought for their special purposes, and as very roughly embodying in their different degrees various experiences which the human consciousness passes through in the course of its evolution. "It is not till all the five shells have been successively peeled off that consciousness enters the soul, and it sees itself and the universal being as one. The first three are

peeled off at each bodily death of the man, but they grow again out of what remains. It is not enough to pass beyond these, but beyond the other two also. Then when that is done the student enters into the fulness of the whole universe; and with that joy no earthly joy can for a moment be compared."

"Death," he continued, "is usually great agony, as if the life were being squeezed out of every part—like the juice out of a sugar-cane—only for those who have already separated their souls from their bodies is it not so. For them it is merely a question of laying down the body at will, when its *karma* is worked out, or of retaining it, if need be, to prolonged years." It is commonly said that Vasishta, who first gave the sacred knowledge to mankind, is still living and providing for the earth; and Tilleináthan Swamy is said to have seen Tiruválluvar, the pariah priest who wrote the *Kurral* over 1000 years ago. "In ordinary cases the last thoughts that cling to the body ('the ruling passion strong in death') become the seed of the next ensuing body."

In this system the outermost layer of that portion of the human being which survives death is the shell of thought (and desire). As the body is modified in every-day life by the action of the thought-forms within, and grows out of them, so the new body at some period after death grows out of the thought-forms that survive. "The body is built up by your thought, and not by your thought in this life only, but by the thought of previous lives."

Of the difficult question about hereditary likeness, suggesting that the body is also due to the thought of the parents, he gave no very detailed account,—only that the atomic soul is carried at some period

after death by universal laws, or by its own affinities into a womb suitable for its next incarnation, where, finding kindred thought-forms and elements, it assimilates and grows from them, with the result of what is called family likeness.

Some of his expositions of Astrology were very interesting to me—particularly to find this world-old system with all its queer formalities and deep underlying general truths still passively (though I think not actively) accepted and handed down by so able an exponent—but I cannot record them at any length. The five operations of the divine spirit, namely—(1) Grace; (2) Obscuration; (3) Destruction; (4) Preservation ; and (5) Creation, correspond to the five elements—space, air, fire, water, and earth—and are embodied in the nine planets, thus—(1) Raku and Kètu ; (2) Saturn ; (3) the Sun and Mars ; (4) Venus, Mercury, and the Moon ; (5) Jupiter. It is thus that the birth of a human being is influenced by the position of the planets—*i.e.* the horoscope. The male semen contains the five elements, and the composition of it is determined by the attitude of the nine planets in the sky! There seems here to be a glimmering embodiment of the deep-lying truth that the whole universe conspires in the sexual act, and that the orgasm itself is a flash of the universal consciousness ; but the thought-forms of astrology are as indigestible to a mind trained in Western science as I suppose the thought-forms of the latter are to the philosopher of the East!

When I expostulated with the Guru about these, to us, crudities of Astrology, and about such theories as that of the flat earth, the cause of eclipses, etc., bringing the most obvious arguments to attack his

position—he did not meet me with any arguments, being evidently unaccustomed to deal with the matter on that plane at all; but simply replied that these things had been seen "in pure consciousness," and that they *were* so. It appeared to me pretty clear, however, that he was not speaking authentically, as having seen them so himself, but simply recording again the tradition delivered in its time to him. And here is a great source of difficulty; for the force of tradition is so tremendous in these matters, and blends so, through the intimate relation of teacher and pupil, with the pupil's own experience, that I can imagine it difficult in some cases for the pupil to disentangle what is authentically his own vision from that which he has merely heard. Besides—as may be easily imagined—the whole system of teaching tends to paralyse activity on the thought-plane to such a degree that the spirit of healthy criticism has been lost, and things are handed down and accepted in an otiose way without ever being really questioned or properly envisaged. And, lastly, there is a cause which, I think, acts sometimes in the same direction—namely, that the *yogi* learns—either from habit or from actual experience of a superior order of consciousness—so to despise matters belonging to the thought-world, that he really does not care whether a statement is true or false, in the mundane sense—*i.e.* consistent or inconsistent with other statements belonging to the same plane. All these causes make it extremely difficult to arrive at what we should call truth as regards matters of fact—appearances alleged to have been seen, feats performed, or the occurrence of past events; and though there may be no prejudice

against the *possibility* of them, it is wise—in cases where definite and unmistakable evidence is absent, to withhold the judgment either way, for or against their occurrence.

With regard to these primitive old doctrines of Astronomy, Astrology, Philology, Physiology, etc., handed down from far-back times and still embodied in the teaching of the Gurus, though it is impossible to accept them on the ordinary thought-plane, I think we may yet fairly conclude that there is an element of cosmic consciousness in them, or at any-rate in many of them, which has given them their vitality and seal of authority so to speak. I have already explained what I mean, in one or two cases. Just as in the old myths and legends (Andromeda, Cupid and Psyche, Cinderella and a great many more) an effort was made to embody indirectly, in ordinary thought-forms, things seen with the inner eye and which could not be expressed directly—so was the same process carried out in the old science. Though partly occupied with things of the thought-plane, it was also partly occupied in giving expression to things which lie behind that plane—which we in our Western sciences have neither discerned nor troubled ourselves about. Hence, though confused and defective and easily impugnable, it contains an element which is yet of value. Take the theory of the flat earth for instance, already mentioned, with Mount Meru in the north, behind which the sun and moon retire each day. At first it seems almost incredible that a subtle-brained, shrewd people should have entertained so crude a theory at all. But it soon appears that while being a rude explanation of external facts, and one which might

commend itself to a superficial observer, it is also and in reality a description of certain internal phenomena seen. There are a sun and moon within, and there is a Mount Meru (so it is said) within, by which they are obscured. The universe within the soul and the universe without correspond and are the similitudes of each other, and so (theoretically at anyrate) the language which describes one should describe the other.

It is well known that much of the mediæval alchemy had this double signification — the terms used indicated two classes of facts. Sometimes the inner meaning preponderated, sometimes the outer; and it is not always easy to tell in the writings of the alchemists which is specially intended. This alchemical teaching came into Europe from the East —as we know; yet it was not without a feeling of surprise that I heard the Guru one day expounding as one of the ancient traditions of his own country a doctrine that I seemed familiar with as coming from Paracelsus or some such author—that of the transmutation of copper into gold by means of solidified mercury. There is a method, he explained, preserved in mystic language in some of the ancient books by which mercury can be rendered *solid.* This solid mercury has extraordinary properties: it is proof against the action of fire; if you hold a small piece of it in your mouth, arrows and bullets cannot harm you; and the mere touch of it will turn a lump of copper into gold.

Now this doctrine has been recognised by students of the mediæval alchemy to have an esoteric meaning. Quicksilver or mercury—as I think I have already mentioned—is an image or embodiment of

thought itself, the ever-glancing, ever-shifting; to render quicksilver solid is to fix thought, and so to enter into the transcendent consciousness. He who does that can be harmed neither by arrows nor by bullets; a touch of that diviner principle turns the man whose nature is but base copper into pure gold. The Guru, however, expounded this as if in a purely literal and external sense; and on my questioning him it became evident that he believed in some, at anyrate, of the alchemical transmutations in this sense—though what evidence he may have had for such belief did not appear.

I remember very well the evening on which this conversation took place. We were walking along an unfrequented bit of road or by-lane; the sky was transparent with the colors of sunset, the wooded hills a few miles off looked blue through the limpid air. He strode along—a tall dark figure, with coal-black eyes—on raised wooden sandals or clogs—his white wrapper loosely encircling him—with so easy and swift a motion that it was quite a consideration to keep up with him—discoursing all the while on the wonderful alchemical and medical secrets preserved from ages back in the *slokas* of the sacred books—how in order to safeguard this arcane knowledge, and to render it inaccessible to the vulgar, methods had been adopted of the transposition of words, letters, etc., which made the text mere gibberish except to those who had the key; how there still existed a great mass of such writings inscribed on palm and other leaves, and stored away in the temples and monasteries—though much had been destroyed—and so forth; altogether a strange figure—something uncanny and superhuman about it.

I found it difficult to believe that I was in the end of the nineteenth century, and not three or four thousand years back among the sages of the Vedic race; and indeed the more I saw of this Guru the more I felt persuaded (and still feel) that in general appearance, dress, mental attitude, and so forth, he probably resembled to an extraordinary degree those ancient teachers whose tradition he still handed down. The more one sees of India the more one learns to appreciate the enormous tenacity of custom and tradition there, and that the best means to realise its past may be to study its present life in the proper quarters.

His criticisms of the English, of English rule in India, and of social institutions generally, were very interesting—to me at anyrate—as coming from a man so perfectly free from Western "taint" and modern modes of thought, and who yet had had considerable experience of state policy and administration in his time, and who generally had circled a considerable experience of life. He said—what was quite a new idea to me, but in the most emphatic way—that the rule of the English in the time of the East India Company had been much better than it had become since under the Crown. Curiously enough, his charge was that "the Queen" had made it so entirely commercial. The sole idea now, he said, is money. Before '57 there had been some kind of State policy, some idea of a large and generous rule, and of the good of the people, but in the present day the rule was essentially feeble, with no defined policy of any kind except that of the money bag. This criticism impressed me much, as corroborating from an entirely

independent source the growth of mere commercialism in Britain during late years, and of the nation-of-shopkeepers theory of government.

Going on to speak of government generally, his views would, I fear, hardly be accepted by the schools—they were more Carlylean in character. "States," he said, "must be ruled by Justice, and then they will succeed." (An ancient doctrine this, but curiously neglected all down history.) "A king should stand, and did stand in old times, as the representative of Siva (God). He is nothing in himself—no more than the people—his revenue is derived from them—he is elected by them—and he is in trust to administer justice—especially criminal justice. In the courtyard of the palace of Chola-King, near Tanjore, there hung at one time a bell which the rajah placed there in order that anyone feeling himself aggrieved might come and ring it, and so claim redress or judgment. Justice or Equality," he continued, "is the special attribute of God; and he who represents God, *i.e.* the king, must consider this before all things. The same with rich people—they are bound to serve and work for the poor, from whom their riches come."

This last sentence he repeated so often, at different times and in different forms, that he might almost have been claimed as a Socialist—certainly was a Socialist in the heart of the matter; and at anyrate this teaching shows how near the most ancient traditions come to the newest doctrines in these respects, and how far the unclean commercialism out of which we are just passing stands from either.

As to the English people, he seemed to think them

hopelessly plunged into materialism, but said that if they did turn to "sensible pursuits" (*i.e.* of divine knowledge) their perseverance and natural sense of justice and truth would, he thought, stand them in good stead. The difficulties of the gnosis in England were, however, very great; "those who do attain some degree of emancipation there do not know that they have attained; though having experience they lack knowledge." "You in the West," he continued, "say *O God, O God!* but you have no *definite* knowledge or methods by which you can attain to see God. It is like a man who knows there is *ghee* (butter) to be got out of a cow (*pasu*, metaph. for soul). He walks round and round the cow and cries, *O Ghee, O Ghee!* Milk pervades the cow, but he cannot find it. Then when he has learned to handle the teat, and has obtained the milk, he still cannot find the ghee. It pervades the milk and has also to be got by a definite method. So there is a definite method by which the divine consciousness can be educed from the soul, but it is only in India that complete instruction exists on this point—by which a man who is 'ripe' may systematically and without fail attain the object of his search, and by which the mass of the people may ascend as by a ladder from the very lowest stages to such 'ripeness.'"

India, he said, was the divine land, and the source from which the divine knowledge had always radiated over the earth. Sanskrit and Tamil were divine languages—all other languages being of lower caste and origin. In India the conditions were in every way favorable to attainment, but in other lands not so. Some Mohammedans had at different times adopted the Indian teaching and become Gñánis,

but it had always been in India, and not in their own countries, that they had done so. Indeed, the Mohammedan religion, though so different from the Hindu, had come from India, and was due to a great Rishi who had quarrelled with the Brahmins and had established forms and beliefs in a spirit of opposition to them. When I asked him what he thought of Christ, he said he was probably an adept in gñánam, but his hearers had been the rude mass of the people and his teaching had been suited to their wants.

Though these views of his on the influence of India and its wisdom-religion on the world may appear, and probably are in their way, exaggerated, yet they are partly justified by two facts which appear to me practically certain: (1) that in every age of the world and in almost every country there has been a body of doctrine handed down, which, with whatever variations and obscurations, has clustered round two or three central ideas, of which, perhaps, that of emancipation from self through repeated births is the most important; so that there has been a kind of tacit understanding and freemasonry on this subject between the great teachers throughout history—from the Eastern sages, down through Pythagoras, Plato, Paul, the Gnostic schools, the great mediæval alchemists, the German mystics and others, to the great philosophers and poets of our own time; and that thousands of individuals on reaching a certain stage of evolution have corroborated, and are constantly corroborating, from their own experience the main points of this doctrine; and (2) that there must have existed in India, or in some neighboring region from which India drew

its tradition, *before all history*, teachers who saw these occult facts and understood them well, probably better than the teachers of historical times, and who had themselves reached a stage of evolution at least equal to any that has been attained since.

If this is so then there is reason to believe that there is a distinct body of experience and knowledge into which the whole human race is destined to rise, and which there is every reason to believe will bring wonderful and added faculties with it. From whatever mere formalities or husks of tradition or abnormal growths have gathered round it in India, this has to be disentangled; but it is not now any more to be the heritage of India alone, but for the whole world. If, however, anyone should seek it for the advantage or glory to himself of added powers and faculties, his quest will be in vain, for it is an absolute condition of attainment that all action for self as distinct from others shall entirely cease.

THE END

WORKS BY
EDWARD CARPENTER

(Published by SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & Co. LTD.)

Towards Democracy: Complete Poems in four parts. Library Edition, with two portraits, one vol., large crown 8vo, pp. 506. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

The same. Pocket Edition, without portraits, one vol., India paper, limp binding, gilt edge, 3s. 6d. net.

England's Ideal, and other Papers on Social Subjects. Tenth Thousand, 1909, pp. 176. Cloth, 2s. 6d.; Paper, 1s.

Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure. Essays on Modern Science, etc. Eleventh Thousand, 1910, pp. 176. Cloth, 2s. 6d.; paper, 1s.

Love's Coming-of-Age: A Series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes. Sixth Thousand, 1909, pp. 190. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women. Cloth gilt, pp. 176. 1908. 3s. 6d. net.

Angels' Wings: Essays on Art and Life, with nine full-page plates. Third Edition, 1908. Cloth gilt, pp. 248. 4s. 6d. net.

Adam's Peak to Elephanta: Sketches in Ceylon and India. Copiously illustrated, and containing four chapters on "A Visit to a Gñáni." Third Edition, 1910. Cloth gilt, 4s. 6d.

Works by Edward Carpenter—continued

(Published by SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & Co. LTD.)

The Promised Land: A Drama of a People's Deliverance. In Five Acts. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. net. 1910. The Drama—which is written in blank verse and prose—deals with a Biblical theme, namely the rescue of the children of Israel by Moses, out of Egypt into the land of Canaan; and the scene is laid in the wilderness of Sinai.

Iolāus: An Anthology of Friendship. Printed in Old Face Caslon type, with ornamental initials and side notes. New and Enlarged Edition. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. net.

Chants of Labour: A Song-Book for the People, edited by EDWARD CARPENTER. With frontispiece and cover by WALTER CRANE. Paper, 1s. Sixth Thousand.

(Published by GEORGE ALLEN)

The Art of Creation: Essays on the Self and its Powers. Second Edition, enlarged, 1907. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, pp. 266, 3s. 6d. net.

Days with Walt Whitman, with some Notes on his Life and Work, and three portraits. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net. 1906.

Sketches from Life in Town and Country, with some verses and a portrait of the author. 1908. Cloth gilt, pp. 270, 3s. 6d. net.

(Published by A. C. FIFIELD, 13 Clifford's Inn, E.C.)

Prisons, Police and Punishment: An Inquiry into the Causes and Treatment of Crime and Criminals. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. net. 1905. Paper, 1s. net.

British Aristocracy and the House of Lords. Pamphlet. Price 6d. net.

Edward Carpenter: The Man and His Message. Pamphlet by TOM SWAN, with two portraits and copious extracts from the above works. Price 6d. net.

Photogravure Portrait of E. C., by MATTISON, 1905. Size 8 × 5½, on Mount 12 × 10. Price 2s. net, by post 2s. 3d.

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED, EDINBURGH.

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

- 2-month loans may be renewed by calling (510) 642-6753
- 1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books to NRLF
- Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

JUN 4 1998

12,000 (11/95)

(J401s10)476B Berkeley

YB 23824
U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
C031830669